

**SOVIET OPERATIONAL ART:
WILL THERE BE A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN
THE FOCUS OF SOVIET OPERATIONAL ART?**

A Monograph

by

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph H. Purvis, Jr.

Armor

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**School of Advanced Military Studies
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Will There Be A Significant Shift in
the Focus of Soviet Operational Art?**

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ABSTRACT

SOVIET OPERATIONAL ART: WILL THERE BE A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN THE FOCUS OF SOVIET OPERATIONAL ART? by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph H. Purvis Jr., USA. 50 pages.

The monograph discusses the described shift in Soviet Military Doctrine from the offense to the defense. Of particular emphasis is the impact of any such change at the operational level.

Soviet history is first examined, beginning with the First World War, focusing on the development of Soviet operational warfare. Current doctrine and capabilities are then reviewed to determine the existing state of operational art. Three aspects of the current Soviet initiatives: the term "defensive," arms control, and the economy are subsequently examined as these relate to a potential Soviet doctrinal shift. The paper uses the historical background; current capabilities; the three areas of focus: the term "defensive;" arms control, and the economy to project the future Soviet doctrinal orientation. The final portion discusses associated implications for the U.S. Army.

The conclusions state that the Soviets may be shifting to a defensive doctrine at the operational level but only in the context of preserving the capability to regain the initiative through offensive operations at some point. There is no long term shift to a strictly defensive capability.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Historical	4
III.	Current Doctrine and Organization	13
IV.	Current Initiatives	19
	Defensive Terminology	20
	Arms Reduction	24
	Economic	27
V.	Conclusion	30
VI.	The Future and Implications	33
	Endnotes	40
	Bibliography	46

I. Introduction

The Soviets are moving to revise their doctrine in ways that will emphasize defense. The impact of such a shift would be tremendous and would surface numerous questions regarding the future of Soviet strategy and policy. One such question, which will be dealt with in this paper is how such a move would affect the Soviet's organization for the operational level of war?

Before describing the methodology for the paper, the term "Soviet Military Doctrine" needs to be defined. Soviet military doctrine differs significantly from the American military doctrine. In the American view military doctrine begins at the service level with some commonality across the services. Soviet military doctrine begins at Party level and influences the nation in practically every aspect to include the military's preparation for and conduct of operational art. The influence from Party level has as its basis the teachings of Marx.

Marx viewed historical development as a dialectic process of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis in accordance with the laws of materialism. As military doctrine is defined by the Communist Party, it follows that the dialectical approach applies to the military and in fact is the underlying factor in the historical development of Soviet military doctrine.

The constant dialectical struggle always brings countermeasures; tanks brought anti-tank weapons, aircraft brought anti-aircraft weapons and missiles brought anti-ballistic missile defenses. The dialectic concept explains this evolution in the methods of armed conflict.¹ The new objective reality (synthesis) will cause the military doctrine to assume a new form. This process is normally evolutionary and the Soviet experience reinforces an evolutionary view with a reasonably consistent military doctrine over the long term. At times however, there will be a revolution as with the introduction of atomic weapons in

1945, and again in 1966, when there was a decided change in the Soviet perception of the inevitability of nuclear war. There are some references now to a third revolution due to the technological advancements in conventional weapons.

Marxists also believe in the existence of fundamental laws which cover all aspects of human behavior, to include war. As V. Ye. Savkin said, there is an objective basis for the laws of war.² The Soviets, therefore, view the study of war as being analytical and apply a focus that results in a hierarchical division of components. First, there is military doctrine which is the all encompassing focus for the study of war. According to Savkin: "Military Doctrine is a military-political statement of long term objectives, a set of national directives pertinent to planning for future war."³ Thus, doctrine includes the economy, military and political aspects of the nation. Next, in the hierarchy is military science which is the unified body of knowledge that is involved in the preparation for and conduct of war.⁴ The most important of the six main elements of military science is military art. Military art includes military strategy, operational art, and tactics. This is really more properly called a craft than an art because the Soviets view military art as an applied knowledge or technique.⁵ Savkin in this area discusses norms and artillery pieces per kilometer, for example, as he examines surprise, concentration, and mobility among other principles of military art. The approach to war, then, is both theoretical and practical.

Theoretically, Michael McGwire describes the Soviets as Clausewitzian in their acceptance of the primacy of the political over the military and the importance of a carefully thought out hierarchy of objectives that balances strategic importance with timeliness.⁶ There is only one strategy which includes or drives all the armed forces. Supporting the theoretical base is the practical application in that force structure and equipment reflect the military doctrine.

The current Soviet force structure supports what has been the Soviet doctrine for the conduct of war at the operational level. Recent Soviet statements and actions suggest that this is changing.⁷

Since late 1985, the Soviets have begun to describe their concept of war as defensive. The implications include a reduced force structure for the Warsaw Pact, a force which is defensively organized and equipped; the elimination of nuclear forces in Europe; and, as Secretary Gorbachev describes it, a nuclear free world. The stated intent is a new international order that recognizes the rights of others, encourages trade and promotes world peace. The implications for the West and for the United States in particular, are significant in that the desired outcomes are substantially reduced armed forces for NATO, the elimination of nuclear weapons and increased economic cooperation between the East and the West. This sets the strategic context.

At the operational level of war, Soviet forces would only have the capability to protect the homeland and defeat an aggressor. This translates to a reduction of forces and a restructuring that would eliminate offensive weapons, offensively oriented organizations and training exercises that by their size and design are offensive.⁸

The question thus becomes: are the Soviets proposing a truly defensive posture, which will affect their operational forces, as the west understands the term defensive or will the operational doctrine and structure remain offensive?

Three areas of emphasis will be used in an attempt to reach a conclusion on the Soviet's intentions and associated capabilities. First, we will examine the historical development of Soviet operational art. Secondly, we will review the current doctrine and organization of Soviet forces. Thirdly, the current Soviet

initiatives regarding the use of the term "defensive," arms reductions proposals and the current economic issues as they relate to the military will be evaluated. In conclusion, we will posit a course for the Soviet's operational art in the mid-range future and determine implications for the United States. In examination of the three areas of emphasis, the focus will primarily consider ground maneuver forces. Although a study of operational art properly includes many other aspects, this limitation must be imposed due to the length restriction of the paper.

II. Historical

According to Dr. Bruce Menning in order to understand the Soviet's operational art one must appreciate ideology, technology, geography, environment, culture, and military experience.⁹ The dialectical process is at work throughout all of these areas. Change is part of the norm with is no distinction between past, present and future. A prominent Soviet writer describes the dialectic and its relevance to the military experience in the following manner: "A change in objective reality, primarily in the material basis of battle or operation, leads inevitably to a change in principles, to discarding outmoded ones and developing new ones."¹⁰ Soviet operational art consequently, has evolved naturally throughout the Soviet military history due to this environment of normative change.

The historical review will begin with the period of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905. A. A. Svechin (1870-1933), a former Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union, stated that the failure in the Russo-Japanese War was due to an inability to organize an attack on a large scale. There was now a necessity to link several operations through time and place to form a campaign.¹¹

Critical analysis of war and operational art continued during the period of the First World War and subsequent Russian Civil War. World War I became positional in the West after the failure of the mobile operations based on the

Schlieffen Plan. After the Battle of The Marne, the war stagnated into trench warfare on the western front. The Eastern War was a mobile war although neither side was able to achieve a decisive victory.¹² During this period, Russia suffered tremendous losses, fell into turmoil and was forced to sign the unfavorable Treaty of Brest Litovsk in 1918. The Bolsheviks needed a breathing space in which to consolidate power and to be able to resolve the country's internal struggle manifested in the Civil War. The Russian Civil War ensued until 1921 when the Bolsheviks finally gained complete control of the Russian State.

The Russian experience in the World War I was of space and maneuver due to the expanse of Russia. The experience in the Civil War was also of space and maneuver but due to the numbers of relatively small groups fighting independent actions throughout the country. A breakthrough followed by a drive into the enemy's reserves would provide a decisive victory in the World War I environment. Victory in the Civil War came from the ability to move and maneuver forces rapidly over great distances. The legacy of the period was of movement and maneuver.

Between the world wars the Soviets pursued the issues of the nature of war and of the conduct future war. During this period, they began the study of war at three levels: strategic, operational, and tactical. The Soviets believe they were the first to formally add the third level, operational.

M. N. Tukhachevskiy was one of the first to write of operational war describing a requirement for consecutive operations as he concurrently identified the demise of the idea of the decisive battle.¹³ He also wrote that the new material-technical base of the army allowed for a shift from positional warfare to a more effective form. The new material base came from tanks, long range artillery and aviation. J. F. C. Fuller and Heinz Guderian also influenced the Soviets. The Soviets agreed with the idea of deep battle in Fuller's 1918 work

while faulting him for stopping in his definition at the tactical level. Also, the Soviets felt that Fuller put too much stress on the importance of tanks.¹⁴ The Soviet position reflected a combined arms operation and not one based purely on tanks. They agreed with Fuller's view that high quality forces were necessary while adding the requirement that these forces must also be in sufficient numbers. Tukhachevskiy, then the Chief of the Russian General Staff, wrote an introduction to Fuller's book, Reformation of War. In this he encouraged the reader to use what was relevant so that future war would acquire new and more efficient forms. It was during this period that Soviet theorists began to develop the idea of offensive operations throughout in depth of the enemy more fully.¹⁵

In addition to Tukhachevskiy, another prominent theorist in the period was V. K. Triandafillov. Who was the principle theorist in the concept of combat operations in depth. His ideas subsequently formed the theoretical basis for front offensive operations.¹⁶ Additionally, in 1931 Triandafillov published the report "Basic Questions of Tactics and Operational Art in Connection With The Reconstruction of The Army." This set out the questions of the development of tactics and operational art in relation to the employment of new weapons. Triandafillov espoused the theory of three echelons of tanks. These included NPP (infantry direct support), DPP (long range support of infantry), and DD (long range). The three echelons gave forces the capability to attack throughout the depth of the enemy's combat formations.¹⁷ This was followed in the spring of 1932 by a report by the RKKA Chief of Staff, A. I. Yegorov, which dealt with the simultaneous employment of fire and strike capabilities upon the enemy.¹⁸ Previously, the Red Army had established fronts to meet the needs of the vast theaters of the Civil War. In 1932, they put tank brigades in mechanized corps in order to provide the fronts the capability to execute operational maneuver.

Additionally, bomber and fighter brigades were established in 1933 along with the creation of airborne troop formations.¹⁹ Technology had provided the means to implement deep operations in a combined arms operation.

These theoretical developments and associated changes in force structure continued through 1936 with the emphasis on deep operations and combat in depth. However, in the Stalin purges of 1937-1938 the senior leaders of the Soviet Army were removed. This included Tukhachevskiy who was executed on June 12, 1937 for his alleged anti-state connections with military circles of foreign nations. The purges virtually dissipated Soviet leadership. This lack of senior leadership quickly became obvious in the Army's poor showing during the early weeks of the Soviet-Finnish War of 1939-1940. Execution of the theory was impossible without leadership.

Execution of the operational theory remained a problem as the Soviets fell back under the weight of the German invasion in June 1941. There was an ongoing attempt to rectify the force structure and equipment problems of the Soviet forces but these efforts had begun too late. Also, the senior leadership problem could not be quickly repaired as new leaders had to gain experience and undergo training. The Soviets attempted to resolve the operational problems while they built up forces.

Examples of these efforts to address operational deficiencies can be found in such documents as Directive No. 3 published on 10 January 1942, and Directive No. 3 mandated concentration of forces for operational maneuver. Another example is the 1944 Regulation which continued to address the problem of concentration and speed.²⁰ Improvements in execution came slowly and with setbacks.

The winter campaign of 1942-1943 provides an examples of the successes and failures encountered. The Soviets encircled and defeated the German Sixth Army at

Stalingrad and subsequently seemed to have the initiative. However, some thirty days later, Field Marshal Eric von Manstein outmaneuvered and defeated a numerically superior Soviet force at Kharkov.²¹ Even the subsequent success at Kursk in the summer of 1943 reflected Soviet deficiencies. Here, the Soviets had 4000 armored vehicles as compared to the 2700 fielded by the Germans yet the Soviets lost 2000 vehicles in one week. As late as 1944 the Russians were losing six soldiers for every one German soldier lost in combat.²²

The Soviets continue today to study The Great Patriotic War as they analyze their operational art. The successes they achieved toward the end of the war validate the Soviet concept of military doctrine and military art. The Soviets also remain concerned with the errors of 1941 which resulted in the loss of 7.5 million soldiers, 6.8 million civilians who were killed and another 6 to 10 million civilians who died from indirect causes. The Soviets look at their overall system in three ways as they vow not to let history repeat itself.²³

First, there is doctrine which is derived scientifically using the holistic approach inherent in Marxist-Leninist dialectical theory. Secondly, the Soviets look at the technological level of their force, both qualitatively and quantitatively. This translates to norms for all types of operations. Thirdly, there is the area of style. Style involves the performance of soldiers and battle field efficiency (troop control). The doctrine did not work in 1941 because the technology and style did not support the concept. Mobile forces were needed so that trained commanders could strike deep. Additionally, the discipline had to change from the "revolver" concept of the Civil War to "training." Force was not the means to achieve the desired ends from the soldiers. Moral/political and moral/psychological preparation, held together by rigid discipline, were necessary.²⁴ The lesson from 1941 was not deterrence but defense/deterrence. The

army had to be able to fight, win and retain a margin of power necessary for survival of the nation.

The Soviets have an overarching geostrategic objective which is to promote the long term well being of the Soviet State (communist party). In the accomplishment of this objective, the first order goals are retention of power by the Party, independence of action in the international arena and the avoidance of world war. If it is impossible to avoid war, then it must not be lost.²⁵ The overarching objective is a direct reflection of the concern with the performance of the Armed Forces in 1941.

World War II experiences served as the basis for the organization of the post war army. Numbers of German divisions defeated and numbers of Soviet divisions available were the decisive factors in World War II. Accordingly, favorable correlation of forces was a requirement for success. The intent therefore, of the 1945-1946 reorganization was to improve on the offensive performance attained during the latter part of World War II. The army was reduced in size but still had 175 divisions with 25,000 front line tanks, making it the largest armored force in the world.²⁶ The concept was to survive the American atomic attack and then be able to defend the homeland against the following conventional attack. The Soviets believed that sufficient forces would survive the initial attack to seize Western and Southern Europe. The atomic superiority of the United States called for a forward defense and the survivability of forces for subsequent offensive operations.

At this time when there was a need for increased economic and technological progress to support the changing needs of the armed forces, Stalin imposed internal controls and absolute conformity which stifled an already overburdened economy. The military rapidly became a large force of increasing obsolescence.

The pre-war purge atmosphere descended upon the country and upon the military in particular. This stagnation continued until Stalin's death in 1953.

The political leaders who followed Stalin made significant changes in the Soviet view of war. Khrushchev believed that the Soviets had caught up with the United States in the nuclear arena and nuclear war was therefore no longer inevitable. The potential for war remained but only as a possibility. The possibility was due to the capitalistic nature of the United States and its desire to exploit any vulnerability in Eastern Europe. This meant that the conventional forces had a role but it was only in support of or as a supplement to the nuclear forces. Naturally, operational art and the study of war suffered. There were also other factors critical to the Soviet leadership at this time. Khrushchev wanted to improve relations with the West while improving the economic, particularly the agricultural, condition of the USSR. Reducing the funding for the conventional forces was therefore appropriate for several reasons. Subsequently, defense expenditures between 1955 and 1957 dropped from 29.5 to 27.6 billion dollars.²⁷ Soviet divisional strength dropped to 75 divisions.

It was during this period that the Soviets attained nuclear parity with the United States. They developed a hydrogen bomb in 1953 and tested their first intercontinental missile in 1957. As a further move to the reliance on nuclear weapons, the Strategic Rocket Forces were added as a fifth service in 1959.

The military did never fully supported this doctrine and, in particular, after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, they saw danger in the sole reliance on nuclear weapons. The crisis served to provide an impetus to the study of war which had been neglected since World War II. Even with the death of Stalin in 1953, there had been no real rejuvenation in the study of military sciences until 1956 when it became permissible to study the Great Patriotic War again.²⁸ A contributing factor

in this return to the study of military theory was the 1961 American introduction of the strategy of Flexible Response. These and other factors combined to produce a change in the Soviet high command structure.

The Soviets moved Khrushchev out of power in October 1964 and concurrently began to build their conventional forces while changing the conventional focus from defense to offense. Large scale Soviet exercises, such as "October Storm" in 1965, began in a conventional posture and then transitioned to a nuclear stage.²⁹ This mix of conventional and nuclear training continued until 1966.

After 1966, nuclear war was viewed as avoidable if conventional forces moved fast enough, defeated the NATO conventional forces and reached the NATO nuclear weapons before they could be employed. The Soviets believed that this would probably prevent the war from becoming nuclear because the United States would not want to risk the American homeland by using intercontinental weapons. There was still a Soviet plan in case nuclear weapons were employed but the tactics and force structure were designed to achieve conventional victory through mass and maneuver. By 1967, the buildup in conventional forces was moving rapidly. New equipment such as the BMP, T-64 tank and the mobile SA-4 surface to air missile was fielded. Force levels would reach 147 divisions in 1965 and the Soviets would spend 35-43 billion rubles on defense as compared to the 29-38 billion rubles spent in 1962.³⁰

As with each shift in Soviet military doctrine, studies of the Great Patriotic War were made in the late 60's and early 70's. V. Ye. Savkin, in his 1972 book, The Basic Principles of Operational Art and Tactics, reinforces this reliance on history and to Lenin's teachings as the way to discover the objective laws of war. The Soviet laws of war include the correlation of forces and the importance of the correlation of military potential. Although the laws are objective, the action of

laws takes place more intensively when the activity of leaders create favorable conditions. Conditions can change due to the actions of leaders and also due to outside influences. Savkin counsels that one must follow the laws while ensuring that the current conditions are understood and have not undergone a significant change. Change is normal in the course of affairs with policies and relationships changing by necessity. The early 1970's apparently saw such changes as was reflected in Soviet/American relations.

Detente was a factor after the SALT 1 accords were signed in 1972. Relations appeared to improve as subsequent negotiations for the SALT 1 follow on continued. The Soviets, however, maintained their build up in conventional forces throughout this period while negotiating in the nuclear arena. Between 1970 and 1973 Soviet divisional strength went from 157 divisions to 164. The T-72 tank and HIND-D helicopter were both introduced in 1974.³¹ Although there was less tendency to talk of a strictly nuclear war, nuclear weapons were still a major operational factor. Consequently, conventional forces were expanded and modernized to achieve the objective of defeating the West before the West could employ nuclear weapons. Mobile armor-protected equipment was required and required in sufficient numbers to ensure success. The war would be highly mobile covering hundreds of kilometers with no stabilized front.

The experience of the World War II tank formations served as the example most relevant to modern conditions.³² The concept of the mobile group was studied in 1978 and the Operational Maneuver Group (OMG) was deployed in the 80's. The OMG is not necessarily an organization in all cases as much as it is a concept. The accompanying improvements in the capabilities of the airborne forces as well as in the numbers and employment techniques of helicopters enhanced the Soviet deep battle capabilities. Additionally, the decentralization of helicopter formations

was an attempt to provide a more timely response to the ground forces. This seems to have resulted from the experiences in Afghanistan. The thrust of each conventional system reflects the issues of survivability, mobility and the ability to defeat the enemy in the depth of the operational formations.³³

There appear to be three constants in Soviet military doctrine since 1960. The first is that there are two sides to doctrine; political and military-technical. Politically the Soviets are opposed to aggression but as a precaution must maintain military-technical readiness: modernized equipment, a high training status and moral-combat qualities of the soldier. Secondly, if there is a war it will be a surprise attack by the West. The Soviets must be prepared to defeat the attackers. Additionally, if war becomes imminent, Soviet conventional forces must be capable of winning through a preemptive strike. Thirdly, the war may be short or protracted. In either case, for the survival of the nation the war will require a total commitment by the nation and victory will come only from joint actions by all the forces.³⁴

This takes us to the early 80's where stagnation in the Soviet high command, concern with the improved American military posture and concern with the concept of AirLand Battle resulted in conditions similar to those of the early 1960's.

III. Current Doctrine and Organization

The early 1980's stagnation in the Soviet high command was at the Secretary level. Secretary Brezhnev was in poor health during his last five years in power with a resulting indecisiveness. The situation did not improve at his death in 1982. The Soviets had two General Secretaries between 1982 and 1985, both of whom were also in poor health. Yuri Andropov followed Brezhnev in 1982 and at his death in February 1984, was succeeded by Konstantin Chernenko. In March 1985, Mikhail S. Gorbachev assumed this position.

Despite the stagnation and the turnover of leaders, the Soviets continued to expand the military following the doctrine they had pursued for the last 20 years. A doctrine that could be described as "nuclear scared." The war was to be conventional but the specter of nuclear war was always present. The Soviets increased both nuclear and conventional capabilities during this period. For example, by 1986, numbers of Soviet divisions increased to 201.³⁵

Soviet planners today continue their traditional view of war. To the Soviets, war can only be ended by completely resolving the policy clash that began the conflict. There must be a permanent resolution or a second war will follow. The loser's total being is destroyed with the victory by one social and economic system over the other.³⁶ Due to the totality of war, the force structure and supporting infrastructure established in peacetime are major determinants of what is possible in war.

Another aspect is the perspective regarding the steps to war. The Soviets do not accept the linear approach to the escalation of war as the West would tend to describe the process. There may be a point at which the Soviets sense that they must move to prevent the situation from shifting to one which provides NATO favorable correlation of forces. The Soviets view escalation as dangerous and more likely the progression to conflict as a series of disjunctions or catastrophic folds. The change from one situation to another, much like the abrupt change caused by a fold in a piece of paper, would be sudden. At this point the Soviets would shift from a policy of prevention to the objective of not losing. Surprise, correct correlation of forces and shock produce victory.³⁷ Soviet forces are currently structured to fight and win if the first objective of avoiding war can not be met.

The offense remains the ultimate means to victory. In the offense, modern

operations will be on a strategic scale. The front will no longer be the operational headquarters with a resulting need for a new level of command above the front. The new level is the Theater of Military Operations (TVD).³⁸ "New" is actually a misnomer in that a theater level of command was used in World War II. The current TVD controls the forces of several fronts as they conduct simultaneous operations in support of a single concept. A changing reality, combined with the historical experience of World War II brought the theater level of command back.

The main Soviet TVD is the Western TVD. It has approximately sixty percent of the Warsaw Pact ground forces in the European Theater. The Western TVD encompasses Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland, and the Baltic and includes the Carpathian, Belorussian and Baltic military districts.³⁹ The military districts are peacetime headquarters with mobilization missions. Additionally, some probably become wartime front command and control structures. There are 93 divisions (62 Soviet and 31 non-Soviet) in the Western TVD with approximately 50 percent of these combat ready.⁴⁰ The Western TVD is probably organized with 3-4 fronts forward and 1-3 strategic fronts in the rear.⁴¹

The front's mission is to penetrate deep, possibly to the Rhine in Northwest Europe, bypass heavy resistance and attack the reserves. Normally the front will employ 3 armies (2 to 3 divisions each) forward with 2 armies in the second echelon. Leading with motorized rifle divisions, the army would probably employ tank divisions in the second echelon. Although the emphasis continues on quantity, the changing nature of war may be causing changes in operational concepts.

In 1982, Marshall Nikolai V. Orgarkov, former Chief of The General Staff and now the Western TVD Commander, stated that a revolution in military affairs was taking place and that future conventional weapons would produce nuclear like

effects.⁴² Mobility and survivability would be essential on the new battlefield.⁴³ Mobility was described as critical with a need for new ideas in military operations that would result in actions the enemy does not expect. Due to the changing nature of war, some authors called for new forms of dispersal in depth and across an advancing front.⁴⁴ Dr. Jacob Kipp writes that the dominance of the offense in this era has the form of "...increasing capabilities for maneuver of forces and means over ever increasing areas."⁴⁵

The OMG concept supports this increased operational maneuver environment and will be employed at front and army levels to attack the command and control facilities, nuclear assets, air defense assets, airfields, and transportation means of NATO. The OMG is a combined arms, tasked organized structure generated generally from the parent front or army.

Fire support doctrine assists the OMG by preventing NATO long range fires from disrupting the OMG as it forms and moves. As the OMG approached the FEBA, fires would be shifted to short range weapons in what Orgarkov called "integrated fire destruction of the enemy."⁴⁶ The OMG's mission is to suppress the enemy with fires and continue its forward movement. The destruction of forces would not be its primary mission.

The emphasis on speed, mobility and initiative is to achieve an intermingling of forces to make nuclear and precision targeting difficult and to create confusion as NATO forces attempt to attack flanks and follow on echelons. The desired result is that Western deep attack and deep fires are defeated in a preemptive manner.

Speed and rapid intermingling of forces is enhanced by the use of forward detachments. The forward detachment is a force at each echelon from front to possibly regiment. Its mission is to penetrate the covering force or security

zone in unprepared or partially prepared defenses. The intent is to preempt the establishment of a continuous defense and to facilitate the employment of the main force. In the situation where the defense is fully prepared the forward detachment would follow after the penetration and lead the operational force in the exploitation. In this instance, its mission would be the fragmentation of the enemy forces and facilitate forward movement.⁴⁷

The Soviets must accomplish three requirements in their offensive operations if they are to rapidly penetrate NATO's forward defenses and attack deep into the rear areas. The first is surprise in that a superiority of forces at the critical place is necessary to achieve success. Secondly, the forces must avoid any activities (mobilization primarily) which reveal that an attack is coming. The third requirement is generated if the first two requirements prevent full mobilization. The third requirement is the necessity for Soviets to put all of the deployed forces forward if favorable force ratios are to be achieved. This means that echelonment, if used at all, cannot be deep at the tactical and operational levels.⁴⁸

The combination of the employment of the forward detachment and the operational maneuver group along with the adherence to these three requirements are expected to achieve the mobility and survivability required on the modern battlefield.

The structure of the ground forces also supports the operational requirements. Tank armies and divisions reflect a more combined arms approach with mechanized infantry numbers being increased in the tank army and tank division structure.⁴⁹ The increase results from the replacement of the organic motorized rifle company in each tank regiment by a battalion. Enhanced capability for deep fires and deep battle is gained with a self-propelled artillery battalion being added to each

tank division's regiment.⁵⁰ Additionally, the assignment of army aviation (helicopters) at each level from military district to division makes the division truly combined arms.⁵¹

The thrust has been to increase maneuverability, allow for more decentralized operations and improve combined arms capability. Units are described as probably smaller, with fewer tanks and operating with heavier single echelons.⁵²

Equipment and logistical support are included in the upgrading of forces. In 1982 the T-80 tank was introduced along with a dual capable (conventional-nuclear) 203mm self-propelled artillery piece. Improved versions of surface to air missiles, attack and lift helicopters and new fighter/fighter-bomber aircraft were also fielded.⁵³ Pre-positioning of equipment and supplies is necessary if an attack is to be made without mobilization. There are currently stockpiles of supplies in the forward areas capable of supporting many weeks of combat operations.⁵⁴ Pre-positioned sets of equipment would also be necessary in this concept of war. Turbiville postulates that in addition to combat forces, it is probable that engineer, technical support and medical support units would also be prime prepositioning candidates. Practical efforts appear to support the theoretical underpinnings of the Soviet operational art. However, some Soviet leaders have concerns.

Marshal Ogarkov complained in an interview on 9 May 1984 of the narrowmindedness around him and insisted that the Party fulfill its pledge to provide for the reliable defense of the country.⁵⁵ He felt that the Armed Forces were not being resourced to meet the increasing American threat and changing nature of war.

Then, in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev, began a series of proposals calling for nuclear and conventional arms control measures. He also initiated unilateral

troop and tank reductions. Traditionally, the Soviets have been willing to address arms control only when they have wanted to preempt a potential shift in the correlation of forces from East to West. The Soviets clearly have a superiority in the nuclear and conventional fields today. Therefore, the current initiatives do not seem appropriate. We will next examine these initiatives to determine why they are being made and the affects of each on Soviet organization and doctrine at the operational level.

IV. Current Initiatives

Every five years the Soviets hold a Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow. Significant changes in the Party's direction can result from the Secretary General's opening speech.⁵⁶

This was true following the 1961 Congress in that the Soviets made a significant shift in their view of war. The shift was to a belief in the primacy of nuclear weapons over conventional forces. Accordingly, at the opening speech to the 22nd Congress in 1961, Khrushchev stressed the power and importance of nuclear weapons. After the 23rd Congress in 1966 there was also a shift in the doctrinal approach to war. Nuclear war in the next conflict was no longer viewed as inevitable. Consequently, we saw the buildup of conventional forces in the Soviet Union.

The 27th Congress was held in February 1986 with Secretary Gorbachev declaring the Soviets as non-belligerents who possess only a defensive military doctrine. The Party program, adopted at the 27th Party Congress, described the doctrine:

It is under the Party's guidance that the country's policy in the field of defense and security and Soviet military doctrine, which is purely defensive in nature and geared to ensuring protection against outside attack, are worked out and implemented.⁵⁷

If what has been true in the past holds, we should see a change in Soviet military doctrine in the future.

Secretary Gorbachev talks both of change and proposed initiatives. The Soviets have begun an apparent "pullback" in the international arena. This began in May 1987 with the announced withdrawal from Afghanistan and continued with the accord reached in Angola.⁵⁸ In December 1987, the INF Treaty was signed. Then on 7 December 1988 Gorbachev stated that the Soviet Union would decrease its military troop strength by 500,000 men and the tank fleet by 10,000 tanks. Additionally, all Soviet forces remaining in Eastern Europe would be reorganized into structures that have defensive capabilities only.⁵⁹ Despite these moves by Gorbachev there are those who argue for caution.

General John Galvin, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, takes the position that there has been no change and none will follow.⁶⁰ President Reagan took a hopeful "wait and see" position as he said that the moves were based on American strength and not on Soviet good will.⁶¹

To decide what we believe to be the truth about the Soviet capabilities we will look at three areas. The first is the issue of the term "defensive" and how the Soviets apply it in their military art and force posture. Secondly, the arms reduction proposals will be evaluated as they apply to operational doctrine and forces. The third area addresses the Soviet economy and the relationship of a Soviet defensive operational posture with the country's current economic situation. In varying degrees all of these factors potentially affect the Soviet's concept and doctrinal development of operational art.

Defensive Terminology

Defense and the application of the term to Soviet doctrine is the first issue to be discussed. The issue is: are the Soviets changing from a doctrine based on the offense to one which will provide defensive capabilities only at the operational level? First, there are several aspects of Soviet doctrine that

appear relevant to this section of the paper.

The Soviet Union's military doctrine is based on the ideology of the Communist Party and the history of the Soviet Union. Ideologically, dialectical materialism serves as the ideological basis for the concepts of the conduct of war. One of the laws of dialectical materialism is the law of the unity and struggle of opposites. The law explains the continuous conflict for example, between the attack and the defense as the way to conduct war.⁶² Further, a family of weapons and corresponding dominance on the battlefield can be seen as causing the waging of war to rest on a continuum of the defense-offense-defense. The machine gun and the introduction of the tank in World War I are examples of this idea.

Amplification of this concept is seen in the following quotation:

Soviet military writers regularly emphasize the reciprocal interaction of offense and defense, which is sometimes characterized as a dialectical unity of opposites: the defense is at once a form of the offense, just as the offense can and necessarily does serve defensive purposes.⁶³

Historically, Soviet doctrine has remained essentially offensive since the end of World War I. Also, in the historical context, today's defensive statements are not new. Prior to 1970 the Soviets were also asserting the defensive nature of their doctrine.⁶⁴ There are two strategies used by the Soviets according to Weeks. The first he describes as declaratory and the other as operational. While espousing what an enemy wants to hear, one postures forces to ensure the survival of the homeland. The Soviets have always maintained a sufficient defensive force to defeat the aggressor if attacked. However, the preferred course is to conduct combat on foreign soil through a preemptive strike.⁶⁵

It appears then, that offensive operations have in fact been the central operational theme in Soviet military doctrine regardless of the declaratory policy. Success comes not only from concentration but a concentration at the right place and time. Numbers alone can accomplish this: but, surprise can also

produce superiority when total numbers are not available. The Soviet operations in Manchuria in 1945, the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia and the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan all depended on surprise for success.⁶⁶ This theme continues with current maneuvers such as "Zapad-81," conducted in 1981, being based on minimal preparation, speed, large combined arms forces designed for deep exploitation and the use of airborne and air assault troops.⁶⁷

Despite the offensive focus, offensive actions may not always be possible at a moment in time. In the overall context of the Great Patriotic War, the offense came after a defensive operation which attrited the Germans, allowed the Russians to build power, concentrate and launch a series of deep operations. These actions eventually enabled the Russians to reach Berlin. It was the offense which produced the victory after the defense set the conditions. Having achieved nuclear parity with the United States, the Soviets view a war today as being conventional and conducted as theater level. The current family of nuclear weapons have caused a shift in the conditions of war from nuclear to conventional. Therefore, if the Soviets are shifting from an offensive doctrine there must be a corresponding reduction in their conventional forces and a change in the structure of forces.

Despite the Secretary's December 1988 proposals for Soviet troop and tank reductions, these are only a first step if Soviet forces are to reach sizes that will only provide a defensive capability. Current numbers and organizational capabilities may not be altered significantly by the Secretary's proposals.⁶⁸ Only the future can determine if appropriate reductions and associated actions will follow. In an effort to examine other possibilities, one could assume that the Soviets are not moving to a defensive posture. If that is the case, why is there now the focus on the term defensive and accompanying proposals? Where could

this initiative lead in the future?

Military science, to the Soviets, is the science of future war. The study of future war is an exercise in foresight which includes forecasting of trends in the correlation of forces and the examination of scientific-technical developments.⁶⁹ Current forecasts project increased future capabilities through sophisticated technology which is a great deal more than faster or better protected tanks. The future weapons systems, with their speed of targeting through automation and the increased accuracy of precision guided munitions (PGM) are viewed as potentially altering the correlation of forces. Historically, the West has maintained a technological superiority, therefore the shift in the correlation will be to West. This is perhaps the concern of the Soviets in their initiative where they describe their doctrine as defensive. The declaratory defensive policy is to meet the technological issue and not necessarily an attempt to reduce the danger of world war.

If the Soviets are to counter this shift in the correlation of forces due to technology and ensure the survival of the nation in the interim, several options could be employed. First, one could use the "Kursk paradigm" and defend until the correlation shifts allowing offensive operations.⁷⁰ Secondly, precision weapons are not as effective against defensive forces in prepared positions as they are when employed against large, moving formations. A doctrinal shift which allowed forces to survive the initial attack while maintaining the capability to go on the offense has historical precedent and would meet near term requirements. Although current arms reduction proposals are encouraging, Soviet ideology, history and present strength levels suggest a continuing offensive doctrine. And has been discussed, there may be other plausible explanations for the Soviet statements and actions. Traditionally, this declaratory defensive doctrine naturally leads to a

second or more properly a complementary option as the Soviets attempt to counter a shifting correlation of forces. That option would be arms reduction agreements. Arms reduction agreements would be an integral part of a political strategy because once restraints are in place in democratic societies they have proven extremely difficult to remove.⁷¹

Arms Reduction

Dr. Kipp writes that to understand the implications of the redefined Soviet doctrine, one must understand the relationship among deterrence, war fighting capabilities, and war prevention.⁷² Deterrence comes from nuclear forces and the threat of a catastrophic destruction of the nation. If one assumes that diplomacy will produce a nuclear free Europe and the elimination of the threat to the Soviet Union from inter-continental missiles, then deterrence is no longer a factor. As was stated earlier, Soviet military-political doctrine appears to indicate that the Soviets believe future war should be kept conventional and that they have the capability to accomplish that goal.⁷³ And if we assume that the Soviets intend to maintain an offensive conventional force capability (history and current forces supports this assumption), then the redefined doctrine then must be based on war prevention. The Soviet nation must be protected during this period of a changing correlation of forces.

Prevention of a surprise attack and by that the elimination of NATO forces capable of making a surprise attack, becomes the objective in a war prevention doctrine. To operationalize that objective, one would attempt to negotiate arms control agreements. The West must be convinced that, due to a reduced Soviet threat, NATO forces can likewise be reduced and associated modernization programs can be slowed. The most important objective during this period is for the Soviets to manage the transition to the new family of precision weapons while preparing

Soviet forces for the new conditions in warfare.⁷⁴

The political and military strategies employed by Secretary Gorbachev appear to be reducing tension between the East and West. Although a lessening of tensions has not historically meant a closer relationship with the Soviets, it has brought changes. The record of Soviet actions regarding their previous international agreements should be reviewed in an effort to determine what these changes might be in the future.

Newspaper headlines, reflected easing tensions and major steps toward peace. They were headlines however, in 1963 when the Partial Test Ban Treaty was signed.⁷⁵ During this same period though, the Soviets continued in an uninterrupted buildup of their nuclear arsenals while at the same time the West underestimated the overall nuclear capabilities of the Russians.⁷⁶ The case has been made that the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) did not dampen the Soviet interest in Ballistic Missile Defense but gave the Soviets time to reach parity.⁷⁷

The INF Treaty came after the Soviet political campaign failed to stop the deployment of the Pershing II's. There had been no need for a treaty to stop the deployment of the neutron bomb in 1978 because President Carter decided not to deploy the system. The intensive Soviet efforts to influence Western governments through the peace movements had succeeded.⁷⁸ Meaningful discussions on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) did not get underway until 1973 when the Soviet conventional restructuring was well along. In any case there were no serious Soviet proposals until 1976 when the Soviets agreed to conventional reductions. The agreement though, was for the United States to reduce nuclear delivery means by removing 54 F-4 Phantoms and 36 Pershing I missiles.⁷⁹ The Soviet objective of preventing nuclear destruction of the homeland was at work. The Soviets did not

ask for Western conventional forces to be removed because their primary concern was nuclear strike capability. Additionally, the Soviet conventional forces were available in such numbers that reductions could be made while retaining a superiority. This series of arms control agreements and discussions ended in December 1979 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

Historically then, the Soviets generally do not bring an openness to the arms control arena. Previous agreements have been made to meet Soviet objectives and not in the interest of world peace perse. Agreements reached in the future, which will undoubtedly reduce American military capabilities, must ensure comparable reductions in Soviet capabilities. Although the arms reduction and verification proposals made in 1988 look promising, the Soviet record and concern with the conditions of future war would suggest that Soviet needs are the basis for the current arms control initiatives.

There are four variants by which one can address stability in the arms control arena: the present system of a counterattack, offensive capability which allows attack into the enemy's territory; a defense in depth capability where eventually one would counterattack into the enemy's territory; a defense/offense capability in which the offense would only be on one's own territory and lastly, the pure defense variant in which the only capability is to defend territory. This defense/defense variant is the only way to prevent war.⁸⁰ The author of this four variant proposal is a Soviet who states that the issues are deciding the criteria for descriptions of offensive and defensive capability as well as viable verification procedures. Offensive/defensive criteria and verification are the critical elements of any arms reduction agreement. If the Soviets are to be truly defensive we should put the proposals back into the Soviet camp by such counterproposals as asymmetrical reductions which would address the real military

power advantages and concerns of the Soviets. Using such determinants as numbers of divisions or tanks may not be to the advantage of the United States and may in fact support ongoing Soviet internal initiatives. The West must understand the Soviet military doctrine, what it encompasses and what the objectives are for the country.⁸¹

The next area for analysis is the Soviet doctrine of defense and its relationship to the economy. The question is are the Soviets moving to a defensive doctrine to strengthen the Soviet economy with the end state an improvement in the country's standard of living or is the intent to create an improved industrial base for the needs of the military?

Economic

Secretary Gorbachev at the 27th Party Congress in February 1986 spoke of new approaches and new methods for implementation throughout the country. He specifically called for an acceleration in the socio-economic sector as he viewed this as the key to the Soviet immediate and long term problems.⁸² Gorbachev's 15 year plan calls for the economy to grow at a 4% annual rate. This is twice the current annual rate.⁸³ At the same time that the Secretary established these ambitious goals, there seems to be a widening gap between the goals of the socialist state and the methods being used to achieve these goals.⁸⁴ The issue of a gap has been a problem historically for the Soviets.

In the early 1900's Russia was growing in industrial output and was attracting foreign investment. However, only 1.75% of the population worked in factories with the majority employed in agriculture.⁸⁵ Most of the technology that was present came from outside the country. Despite the apparent strength in agriculture, the crop yield was one third to one half below that of Britain or Germany.⁸⁶ In fact, in the last century Russia has gone from a grain exporter to

an importer.

Additionally, the impressive industrial growth after WWII is presently coming to an end. The quantities of finances and manpower that brought the growth can no longer maintain the expansion. Labor and energy shortages coupled with the bureaucratic planning are causing the slowdown.⁸⁷ A significant shortfall in the economy is in the area of high technology. High technology which is the source of the revolution in conventional weapons that Ogarkov sees in the future. These new weapons, combined with the concept of AirLand Battle and Deep Attack, defeat the echelonment of forces that has been the hallmark of the Soviet operational art.

A Western view (mirror imaging) would hold the needs of the military in abeyance as the civilian economic needs were met. Conventional force reductions would have to match those instituted by Khrushchev in 1955-1957 to support this condition. Current initiatives do not appear to reflect such a move. Any evaluation, however, of Gorbachev's restructuring (perestroika) must be from a Soviet perspective.

The Soviets in the modernization program in the 70's set up their weapons needs through the early 1990's. The new SU-27 fighter and T-80 tank are now in production.⁸⁸ If however, the 1986-1987 modernization efforts do not pay off, the next generation of weapons will be in danger. Now is the time when decisions have to be made. The economy showed a slight gain in 1983 but began a slowdown in 1984 which has continued.⁸⁹ The question of Gorbachev's intent to restructure does not seem to be in doubt. One could reach this conclusion both from his comments and from the current economic situation. The issue is the effect on the military.

The Soviet Union appears to devote 11 to 25% of its GNP on defense. In any case, it is probably twice what the United States spends. Additionally, in 1985 the growth in military spending exceeded the growth in the overall economy.⁹⁰

Therefore, a case can be made for the need to release some of these resources for the economy and an associated modernization program.

Historically though, the military establishment as an entity has not suffered even when military spending has been reduced. In 1976-1983, for example, the Soviets procured over 1,100 ICBMs and 700 Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles while the percent of expenditure devoted to strategic weapons was decreasing.⁹¹ There are also some practical problems in the transfer of resources from the military to the civilian sector. Military use of a particular metal, for instance, may be in such quantity that the civilian sector could not use it productively.⁹² Reductions in one area of military spending therefore, do not necessarily directly produce improvements in the standard of living.

Another factor is the precedent established by previous Soviet leaders. The primary objective of these leaders has always been to ensure that the Soviets retained a margin of safety in the correlation of forces. When Khrushchev reduced the conventional forces, he did so with the belief that the Soviet nuclear capability was the key to Russian security. Despite the fact that significant domestic issues have always been present in the economy security has overridden domestic problems in the allocation of resources. Therefore, the current initiatives to decrease conventional forces and restructure the economy are not necessarily related to a change in Soviet doctrine in the manner many would hope. It is more probable that it is a combination of a political strategy with a need to drastically improve the economic potential of the nation. There is a need to gain a breathing space for the economy so that these rapid technological changes do not leave the Soviets in a position of weakness over the long term. The Soviets have a holistic approach to military doctrine that factors in all aspects of a nation's capabilities. A key factor in the determinations of the correlation

of forces is the economic potential and its relevant strength.

Stalin made a Pact with Hitler out of necessity in 1939 in an effort to provide time for the Soviet State to prepare. He went to great lengths to prevent a provocation that would bring the inevitable war with Germany sooner.⁹³ The Soviets will continue to use all the tools at their disposal to maintain the proper correlation of forces. This will include a restructuring of the economy and movement of appropriate resources from the military to produce economic development. The movement of resources though, will be in line with current military needs while looking to the future.

The factors of the term "defensive," arms reduction proposals and economic issues could have significant impacts on the Soviet doctrine at the operational level. However, Soviet history does not support the stated intentions of these initiatives. Changing conditions of war are more probably the cause of structural and doctrinal modifications. These modifications are intended to enhance the offensive capability at the operational.

V. Conclusion

The Soviets power was born in war. World War II was a catalytic event in Soviet history joining together the peoples, the Communist Party, the Leninist system and the homeland.⁹⁴ The thread of continuity that permeates the society is the concern for national security. At the operational level the concept has been one of offense.

Tuckhachevskiy and Triandafillov added the operational level of war as a term needed to describe a new level of warfare in the modern world. The movement and maneuver of large forces was not strategic warfare nor was it at the tactical level. The Soviets attempted operational art (combat action at Army or Army Group level) in World War II with little success initially. The concept was sound but

the Soviets lacked the requisite organization, leadership and equipment. These were not available until 1943 during the period of the victory at Stalingrad and initial successes at Kharkov. Even then, the successes were not always competently orchestrated by front commanders.⁹⁵ The Kursk victory in July 1943 reflected that resources were now available supported by confidence and the capability to execute operational warfare. Manchuria, in August 1945, was a well planned and executed campaign. Front commanders were competently moving and maneuvering armies in the offense. Surprise and a superior concentration of effort, using combined arms forces, produced successes into the depth of the enemy.

Developments since World War II have been consistent as the Soviets have maintained conventional forces organized and equipped to strike rapidly and to go deep in the traditions of Manchuria where forces attacked over 800 kilometers into the enemy's rear. Surprise and a rapid strike into the operational depths is necessary to negate the ability to employ nuclear weapons, to counter the concept of AirLand Battle and more currently to defeat the capabilities of precision munitions. Combined arms forces, organized with self propelled artillery and more infantry, operating dispersed or in single echelon are the forces that would attack in Europe today.

Soviet initiatives that indicate a move to a defensive military doctrine are arguably political and in reality reflect only a temporary change in focus. The change in focus is to meet the needs of the Soviet Union as a new objective reality in warfare is projected. Future war will be highly mobile, dominated by precision weapons capable of potentially nuclear like effects. Soviet forces will lack these weapons for some time to come. A probable Soviet course of action would be to assume a defensive doctrine that would allow survival in an attack by

the West while retaining the capability to conduct offensive operations. The Germans enjoyed such a technological dominance of the battlefield with their armored and air units in June 1941. The Soviets, though losing in the near term, eventually prevailed by employing the defense initially. Additionally, the defense to the Soviet perspective is a temporary state in the continuing dialectic as warfare evolves. The long term effect of these new weapons may make the use of large, echeloned formations impractical due to the ability to strike forces precisely and devastatingly no matter where they are on the battlefield. Victory comes ultimately through the ability to go on the offensive. Soviet military art and force structure both support the capability to conduct offensive actions.

Arms control initiatives meet several needs. First, the Soviets slow down the development of new weapons by the West with the agreements. Secondly, the Soviets gain time to obtain the technology and to restructure the economy, and the military. The restructuring can take place in an atmosphere of reduced tension and decreased competition with less danger to the Soviet nation in the interim.

The economy is the central focus in the restructuring and is directly related to the defensive doctrine. The relationship though is one of support for the military as the first priority. Although the Soviets remain behind the West in technological development, they are prepared to invest first in the military application of new technology.⁹⁶ Currently, the economy can not produce the high technology weapons Soviet military science forecasts as the weapons of future war. The economy needs time and an infusion of Western technology. Furthermore, modern science and technology have taken on the ability to resolve conventional military problems. Previously, military needs led the technological requirements in the development of systems. The future is viewed as a reversal of these roles with technology now leading.⁹⁷ The economy is the key in the ability of Soviet forces

to wage war successfully. Secretary Gorbachev does not remain in power based on the standard of living or economic conditions in the Soviet Union. His base of power comes from internal politics where he must be viewed as strong and as the leader who is ever increasing the relative strength of the nation.⁹⁸

An espoused defensive oriented Soviet Union is less provocative and therefore more likely to accomplish current requirements. The requirements are to slow Western technological developments while at the same time modernizing Soviet capabilities. The defensive Soviet doctrine is not in the context of the defensive/defensive variant.

As the Soviets have done, so must we look to the future. We must attempt to see where the Soviets are moving with their military doctrine, its impact on Soviet operational art and identify the implications for the United States Army.

VI. The Future and Implications

Soviet military doctrine will continue to be offensive in structure and equipment. The Soviets though, will employ defensive operational positioning and maneuver as they project a blurring of the offensive and defensive battles. Extended fire support by new weapons will require initiative, dispersion and movement and maneuver even in the defense. The Clausewitzian framework where the defender has the advantage of choosing the location and time of the blow (after the attacker's initial blow) now requires a reevaluation.⁹⁹ Soviet planners expect theaters to differ in missions while participating in the same strategic fight. For example, one TVD could be in the defense with another was conducting an attack. This shifting could also continue with missions changing several times between Theaters and possibly fronts. As a result there will be less structural distinction among units with organizations requiring a more balanced base.

Surprise will continue to be a factor in each plan as a mobilization would be

detected with today's sophisticated surveillance means. Additionally, the political situation may not allow mobilization resulting in forward deployed forces only making a preemptive strike. Attacks will be on broad fronts with encirclements at front and multi-front level employing large single echelons possibly through army level. Army size OMCs, air assault and airborne forces will be employed deep.

Of particular concern for the Soviets in their deep operations will be the Western reconnaissance strike complexes and reconnaissance fire complexes. The reconnaissance strike complex is the capability to simultaneously find and strike deep targets with missiles and aircraft. The reconnaissance fire complex is at the tactical level and includes tube artillery and MLRS. Both of these are a part of the new technology that permits detection and destruction at the same time. The Soviets both need to develop their own strike capability and to create a reconnaissance destruction complex in order to defeat NATO command and control, target acquisition and missile control complexes.¹⁰⁰

The change, then, in the Soviet operational art will be in the character and complexity of future military operations and the methods by which mission requirements will be fulfilled. The complexity and rapidity of operations will result in smaller forces, more capable of independent operations using more flexible operational techniques. The battlefield will be expanded to include extensive use of the vertical dimension by the Soviets.

Ground forces will be combined arms or structured specifically for the expected enemy or terrain. The homogeneous forces were functional in a nuclear environment. The current conventional threat requires a combined arms force tailored for the mission, yet one that can be maneuvered to meet changing situations. Forces which are unbalanced lack flexibility and have proven

vulnerable as in the 1973 war. The current division is described as too large and the command and control capability at army level inadequate to meet the new environment. The corps and brigade formations used in World War II are seen as a solution to the problem.

The corps organization would be larger than the current division but there would be less formations (fewer corps than the number of current divisions) in the Soviet forces overall. The resulting organization would be more maneuverable, more combined arms capable and would reduce the number of formations creating more room on the battlefield. The Hungarians reorganized their army in 1987 into this corps structure using the assets of 5 divisions to create 3 corps. There were significant savings in manpower and tanks.¹⁰¹

These new organizations provide for more initiative and flexibility at lower levels. The tempo, complexity and likely disruption of command and control require that commanders take the initiative at the appropriate time. The Soviet commander is being given the resources and encouragement to do so.

The Soviet thrust contains three constants as the technology develops over the years. The first is surprise which may only be achievable at the tactical or operational level. Secondly, the new technology weapons are projected to be very effective against large, slow moving forces. Thirdly, Central Europe lacks depth but has a great deal of width. A rapidly striking force, moving with surprise, will be difficult to detect, move to and maneuver against in a timely manner.¹⁰²

We have proposed a perspective of the Soviet force structure and operational art for the mid-term future. There is a need now to determine what the implications are for the American Army and its conduct of operational art.

The doctrine for the U.S. Army's operational art comes from FM 100-5, Operations. The manual describes the Army and how it fights. The focus of the

doctrine is AirLand Battle which describes success as dependent upon four basic tenets: initiative, agility, depth, and synchronization.¹⁰³ Discussions of the tenets in FM 100-5 describe basically the same desired actions and outcomes as we see in the Soviet discussions of their operational art. It seems then that the issue of success becomes one of preparation, use of equipment and execution.

Preparation includes both knowing the threat and training our commanders and soldiers. The Soviets want a short war achieved by attacking an unprepared defense, penetrating into our rear areas and disrupting our defenses. Our training must stress commanders and soldiers in a fluid, confusing environment with the threat capable of conducting the unexpected. Soviet doctrine stresses initiative. The Soviet General Staff and its representatives at levels to include division is described as flexible and willing to exercise appropriate authority. The training threat must also use initiative as appropriate.

The proposed Soviet military restructuring we discussed will present potentially fewer formations on the battlefield. These forces though, will be more capable and more maneuverable creating detection and concentration problems for the American operational commander. We must understand the threat, his desired outcomes and methods of fighting. We must exercise against a viable threat which does not appear in a rigid echelonment with defined separations between echelons moving along the predictable avenue of attack. Movement and maneuver of large forces will be a standard part of Soviet plans.

The American Army, however, does not have a tradition of exercises at the operational level. We work very hard at the tactical level and have the facilities to support tactical training. Despite the fact that resources are more difficult to provide at the operational level, there are ways to accomplish more than we have in the past.¹⁰⁴

The next issue is equipment. American technology gives us an edge in equipment. We must know and use the equipment to its potential. Experience at the National Training Center and in other interactive exercises reflects that as little as one third of the tank killing systems are used in some battles. Additionally, the optimum capabilities of the systems are not always exercised.¹⁰⁵ Fighting outnumbered and against a highly mobile and maneuverable enemy will require the most effective and efficient use of our systems. General Bernard W. Rogers, former SACEUR, states that we will fight the next war with what is on hand in Europe. His estimate is that the equipment, supplies and munitions on hand would last two weeks. The operational commander will have to fight smart and use his resources wisely as there are no replacement end items or stocks of supply available in the short term.¹⁰⁶

Execution of the fight is a combination of the two areas addressed above, preparation and use of equipment. There is one other aspect to consider though that may be at the crux of execution and relates to Colonel L. D. Holder's suggestion that operational level commanders need to practice moving and maneuvering large forces.

FM 100-5 states that no particular echelon of command is uniquely concerned with operational art but, that theater commanders and their chief subordinates usually plan and direct campaigns. Army groups and armies normally design the campaign plan for the ground operations. Corps and divisions, it further states, execute these missions.¹⁰⁷ For the European theater this would translate, for example, into the NORTHAG Commander designing the plan and III Corps executing the operation. Assuming that the divisions of III Corps road marched the entire distance from an initial assembly area to the tactical assembly area in preparation for an attack, each division would move approximately 6000

vehicles.¹⁰⁸ The Corps has approximately 25,000 vehicles which would have to be moved if the entire Corps were to displace.

The movement of this number of vehicles in a timely manner would require a great deal of coordination and planning aside from the issues of security in a modern theater of war. The Third Army made a move in WWII using III Corps to relieve Bastogne during the Battle of The Bulge. The Corps (reinforced with Third Army assets) moved approximately 11,000 vehicles beginning on the evening of 18 December and conducted an attack at 0600 hours on the morning of 22 December 1944. This made it a move over of 150 kilometers for the 4th Armored Division, the unit with the longest route.¹⁰⁹ Although direct comparisons are difficult to make between 1944 and 1988, times can be taken as roughly indicative of that required today to move a large force and deploy it for combat.

The Soviets want to fight a short war with rapid penetrations into the depths of our defenses either after a successful defense or if possible, as a preemptive strike. The current American operational force (corps) to counter this penetration may be too large to move and maneuver in a timely manner (two to four days in our 25,000 vehicle example). The force therefore, may need to be smaller than we would desire but one that, as Patton said, could get there and attain surprise.¹¹⁰ Patton continued to build combat power as other forces followed Millikin's III Corps with each additional unit adding to the combat power of the overall Third Army attack. This concept may be valid today and is worthy of further examination.

The size of the operational force we intend to employ should be dependent upon the threat, threat capabilities and the terrain and not necessarily based on existing structures. It should be a force that can move to the battle in the time required and maneuver once employed. As the Soviets evolve to meet the new

objective reality, we also may need to adjust our doctrine.

We have attempted to foresee the future Soviet conduct of war and in particular the conduct of operational art in light of the current Soviet initiatives. We do not see a lessening in the threat. The study of operational art by American officers and the preparation of American commanders and soldiers must continue with vigor.

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